

MARÍA FERNÁNDEZ

LIFE COACH: KNOCKING DOWN THE OBSTACLES TO PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

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When we think of our ideal life, we often see obstacles that have stood in our way, not realising that the greatest of them all is sometimes our mindset. María Fernández, author of *El Pequeño Libro Que Hará Grande Tu Vida* (*The Little Book that Will Make Your Life Big*) taps into this idea, noting that human beings often fall back on excuses because making authentic change can be challenging. This month, we enjoy a Q&A interview with the author, who also provides readers with tips on how to best negotiate the current health crisis.

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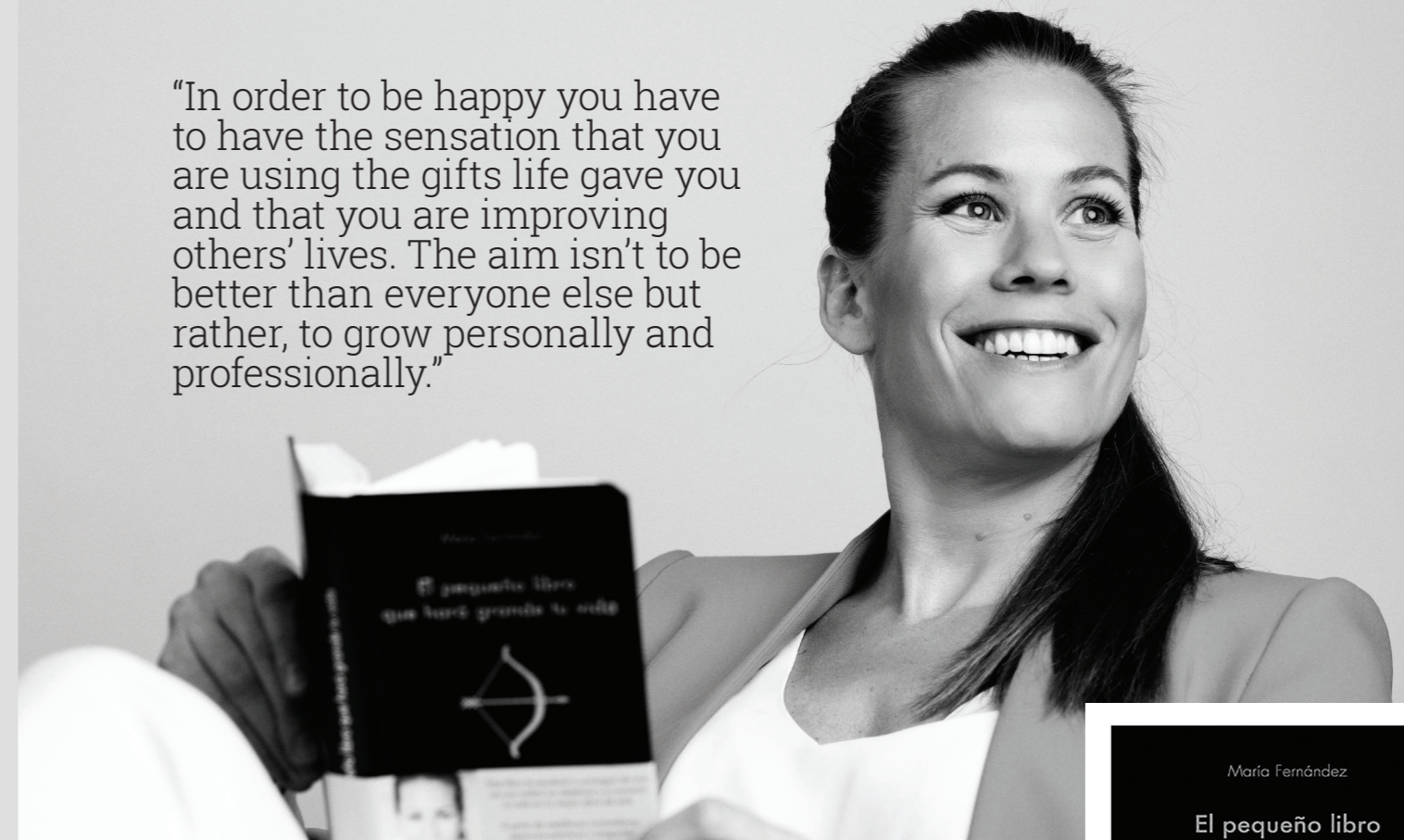
WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A LIFE COACH?

I was working in the Tourism sector abroad. I was happy but I didn't feel that I was utilising the full extent of my abilities. There was an energy inside me that wasn't being channelled into helping myself or others. I decided to leave the industry, sell my car, and prepare with the best trainers in Spain. It was the hardest but also the best decision I have ever made. I had always had a deep sense of empathy and although my life wasn't easy, I developed resources to bounce back from difficulties. I realised that my purpose lay in coaching – something I grew passionate about.

LEAVING A STABLE JOB TO PURSUE YOUR DREAMS IS ALWAYS A RISK...

It was a challenge but it was also the first time I was listening to my inner voice. Precisely because I had burned bridges with the past, I didn't give myself permission to fail. When you promise yourself that you will achieve a goal and you put your heart and soul into it, you obtain the results you are hoping for. When I started out, it was the year 2011 and we were in the midst of a global financial crisis. Then, in 2018, I started writing my book. Its success opened many doors for me. Precisely because I had taken such a big leap myself, I felt more capable of helping others.

"In order to be happy you have to have the sensation that you are using the gifts life gave you and that you are improving others' lives. The aim isn't to be better than everyone else but rather, to grow personally and professionally."



WHAT TYPE OF COACHING DO YOU UNDERTAKE?

Life coaching, executive coaching, and team coaching. Every day is different and it can involve visiting companies to train management, or coaching individuals in my own office. Since COVID I have been doing a lot of tele-coaching. I find that there isn't much of a difference between coaching in person and doing so via video conferencing.

HOW MANY SESSIONS DOES THE AVERAGE PERSON REQUIRE?

You really can't speak in 'averages' when it comes to coaching. Some people need just a couple of sessions to feel 'unblocked' while others ask for follow-ups every month or month and a half until their goals are achieved.

WHAT DOES COACHING INVOLVE?

The aim of coaching is to work on the person's thought patterns and emotions; to help them obtain a winning mindset.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBSTACLES HOLDING PEOPLE BACK FROM THEIR DREAMS?

There are three. Firstly, some people don't know what they want. They haven't worked out a plan of the person they want to be in five years' time, or the goals they wish to achieve. It is important to avoid making endless lists of goals because it can be

impossible to achieve them all. It works better to focus on one goal and to give it everything you've got. The second obstacle is a lack of strategy (this is the easiest to work on), and the third is self-defeating thoughts and beliefs. When there is no conflict or fear standing in your way, you can finally be true to yourself and do what you genuinely love doing and are best suited for.

WHAT IS YOUR BOOK, EL PEQUEÑO LIBRO QUE HARÁ GRANDE TU VIDA, ABOUT?

It is centred on three themes: how to live authentically (in line with your values and vision of life), to have enriching personal relationships (through networking and cherishing friendships and family relationships), and to overcome challenges.

When we are at peace within, we give and receive love in an enhanced manner and this also happens when we knock down our own internal walls. In order to be happy, you have to have the sensation that you are using the gifts life gave you and that you are improving others' lives. The aim isn't to be better than everyone else but rather, to grow personally and professionally.

HOW HAS THE CURRENT COVID-19 CRISIS AFFECTED THE HUMAN PSYCHE?

It has made us more aware of how vulnerable we are and in a way, it is good to recognise that. It is possible to embrace this vulnerability while being conscious of

our inner strength. To aim for security and surety as a whole is ridiculous because we were born into uncertainty and that is what makes life beautiful. Human beings have always faced challenging times. Some have faced world wars and bombings; our cross is COVID-19. We cannot get angry at life or at the system. We need to ask ourselves what each of us can do to help ourselves and others in this situation. Don't feel sorry for yourself; think of how you can find a golden seed in the middle of the devastation. True happiness doesn't lie in living securely; it lies in knowing how to surf the wave of insecurity.

María Fernández's book *El Pequeño Libro Que Hará Grande Tu Vida* is available on www.Amazon.es. Further information, www.coachingandmedia.com